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Rory M. Christian, Chair

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PSC Approves New Area Code in 716 Region

Continuing Growth in Western New York Region Spurs Need for New Area Code

Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Niagara Counties to Add New Area Code in 2024

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) announced that an additional area code overlay has been authorized for all or portions of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Niagara counties, including the larger cities of Buffalo, Jamestown, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda and Niagara Falls in response to the North American Numbering Plan Administrator's (NANPA) forecast of a shortage of telephone numbers in the 716-area code. The new area code is expected to be activated before the second quarter of 2024.

"Because of positive economic growth in Western New York, there is a clear need for more cellular service and other technologies for both home and business," **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** "As a result, an additional telephone area code number is required. The new area code is necessitated by the expansion of telecommunication services in this region."

All new area codes created in the United States and New York State over the past several years have been implemented via an overlay. Demand for new phone numbers is driven largely by economic growth and the phenomenal surge of new technology that requires an individual phone number, such as cell phones and tablets.

In accordance with standard telephone industry guidelines, NANPA's projection forecasts the current 716 area code will exhaust available numbers in the second quarter of 2024. The actual new three-digit area code for Western NY will be announced at a later date.

The new area code will be implemented six months prior to the projected second quarter of the 2024 exhaust date. The implementation of a new overlay area code normally requires concurrent implementation of mandatory 10-digit dialing (the three-digit area code and seven-digit telephone number are required to complete a call) for all calls, whether local or long-distance.

However, by the time the proposed 716 overlay area code becomes effective, customers in the 716-area code will already have transitioned to mandatory 10-digit dialing due to the national implementation of the “988” three-digit hotline to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline which is currently underway and scheduled to be completed by July 16, 2022. Therefore, certain customer education and industry technical milestones will not be needed in this case and the timeline to implement the proposed area code will be shorter than in past overlay code cases.

An overlay is the appropriate means of providing numbering relief for the 716 Number Planning Area (NPA), given the prior successful overlays that have been implemented in New York over the past two decades. The new overlay has a projected life of approximately 29 years.

With the Commission’s decision, all existing 716 area wireline and wireless telephone customers in the overlay area will retain their current 716 area code and telephone numbers, i.e., the new area code would cover requests for new phone numbers once the 716 NPA is fully exhausted.

Today’s decision may be obtained by going to the Commission’s Documents section of the Commission’s Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering case number 22-C-0358 in the input box labeled “Search for Case/Matter Number”. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission’s files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.